

Frantic finale

By **MIKE REGAN**
Wycombe 1, Reading 2

RREADING overcame a bout of F.A. Cup nerves and the notorious Loakes Park pitch to register a victory which, on balance, they just about deserved.

The Third Division side started confidently, despite their recent poor League form, and had their noses in front after just five minutes. A combination of errors in the Wycombe defence left the inventive Friday free to convert an easy chance from a couple of yards.

This shattered the composure of the Rothmans Isthmian League part-timers who looked demoralised and hesitant throughout the rest of the first half which was controlled by a sharper, more efficient Reading side.

On the half hour, Reading increased their lead when Friday, who was earlier booked for a clumsy late tackle on Holifield, took full advantage of a misunderstanding between Phillips and goalkeeper Maskell and tapped home a second goal from close range.

At this stage, the Wycombe supporters—who have seen their team lose only twice in the last 20 matches—were displaying increasing frustration.

Conditions underfoot on the icy pitch were almost impossible, but Wycombe's light and mobile midfield creator Fraser coped with them surprisingly well. Probing and teasing the Reading defence with his deft ball control, he inspired Wycombe to a sound second-half display which, despite moments of undignified retreat, almost earned them a replay.

After 70 minutes Kennedy nodded a long ball from Davies into the path of Pearson who brought Wycombe back into the game with a blistering 20 yards shot which sailed past the mobile Death. This set up a frantic finale in which both Kennedy and Pearson came close to scoring for Wycombe. But in the end, Reading kept their heads and their feet.